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On A Literary Affair



If you'd seen her as I'd seen her, topless
under loft ceilings, caught on pegs in her
brain, frenzied to find an excuse to use words
artfully, wine in place, bed-sheets not thoughtless,
me moving in, under the merciless gaze of
the center of the city's center, where surveillance
is the game's name, & where her, as was salient,
only chance was to win a word-man's love,
you could only have loved her, as I loved her then,
with more vigor, rigorous force than a father or friend.

Ceilings, also, of university classrooms, earth-toned,
dingy, aura of things tepid, daily, I opened the book
to the correct passage, asked the class to follow, she took
advantage of the brief silence to rattle my bones
with brown eyes like saucers, so that I cleared my
throat in response, and we were off into Chaucer,
or Donne, the anyone it could have been, for
she'd taken wing under my skin. For her to fly
where she wanted to meant transgression, yet
books were written in my one little room, & bed—

Why it seemed unreal, sleeping in the loft once
the semester ended in May— I could never take her
to the place she needed to be. To clear space for her
to do what I'd done, to take the cap saying "dunce"
off her head, which was placed there in Cheltenham,
where they broke her in harshly, as they'd tried with
me (and if they failed, it's only because I had the gift
of liking battle-heat), and as years passing skipped the scam.
Her body tense, jerky, surprised at its own courage,
mine half-scandalized, also tense— leaps unearthly.

I don't know where or who she is anymore. What's
left behind: what they've left to me, twenty pages of
criticism, lucid, compulsively disciplined, an act of love
greater than what I performed with her. She cuts
into a line that forms whenever anyone means what they
say in this business (and God knows almost no one does),
God also knows that whatever we produced, our love
impaled us on its sharpness, an eternal maze.
Her skin had a kind of waxen sheen to it, transparency,
eyelashes pronounced. Her words are parented.

posted by [Adam Field](#) on [Thursday, August 01, 2019](#)

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